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BENJAMIN F. BUTLER.

A CORRESPONDENT NOTES SOME OF THE GENERAL'S PECULIARITIES.

His Strong Points of Individuality—Views Which Generally Run Counter to the Commonly-Accepted Ones—An Unhappy Mishap.

[New York Cor. Chicago Journal.]

No man more odd than Benjamin F. Butler comes to my mind. He is here now. As he walks in Broadway, or sits in the theatre, or goes into court in the practice of his profession, he provides amusement for all spectators. Not many of our notables are the equals of his caricatures. But no caricature of Butler in the most hostile of comic journals is so striking as the strong points of his individuality. The regard for him is a strange mixture of ridicule and respect. Put him into a suit of tattered clothes, start him off as a tramp and he would be no remarkable figure in the grotesque walk of life as to city competition, and make the dogs bark more in awe than aggression. But he wears good clothes and has that unmistakable air of property which is sure to command the respect of marauding Americans. "Butler is the funniest man on earth," remarks his fellow-lounger in the hotel corridor.

"I am told that he has accumulated half a million," says another observer.

Instantly the penitent in the careless breast of the first speaker changes from amazed contempt to serious admiration. It may not be the same in Chicago, but here in New York a man known by the bank account he keeps. The fact that Ben Butler is wealthy through his own efforts is enough to make us respect him, in a way; and I trust that I am offending no political prejudice when I write that Butler is not a man to be merely a ridiculous crank while Butler is a man who is admirably eccentric. It is true, however, that he is an unsolved puzzle to those who know him. The only certain conclusion is that he is the most entertaining of men. His conversation is unique. His views nearly always run counter to the commonly-accepted ones, and—stranger still—they do not impress the hearer as having been formed, like those of a professional philosopher, for the express and only purpose of astonishment. I asked him what he thought about journalism for instance.

"I love reporters and I hate editors," he answered. "It is a common fashion to regard all reporters as liars. On the contrary, I have, in a long and varied experience, found them trustworthy. I do not mean to say that there are not wofully bad exceptions; but nine times in ten the printed speech, the hurried account of any public occurrence, is far more accurate than the most conscientious and honest collection of an unprofessional observer would afford."

Butler is a man of varied accomplishments. He is one of the most elaborate of actors. He is a sumptuous liver. When in New York, he literally demands the best that a fashionable hotel affords in the matter of both lodging and meals. He has the exacting taste of an artist, and something of the skill of one, too. A curious habit of his is the raising of a chair to his finger nails. He uses the ends of his fingers to receive as well as make memoranda; and while much of the data thus manured is dry and statistical, there are numerous pictorial features. In his earlier years he was something of an artist, and on returning from a day or evening of intercourse with his fellow man and woman he usually covered with hasty, covert sketches of what has particularly impressed him.

However, I doubt he made the slightest picture of the amusing thing that happened to him. It was in the Union Square theatre, which is furnished with chairs that are automatic to a degree, involving machinery sufficient for a steam engine to every seat. These contrivances, the invention of Steele Maynard, a curious individual, who wrote "Hass Kirke," devised the double stage in advertising up on the Delart system of expression by pantomime. Each of the chairs belongs to a pair, twisted to a solid, iron post, to which it hangs in dependent uncertainty. The stranger who attempts to use it is disarrayed and dumfounded by the problem of how to get into it; but when manipulated by an expert, it unfolds arms, a cushioned seat, a peg to hang his hat on, and even a place for the insertion of his umbrella or cane. On conforming himself to the right angles for a seated posture, he finds that the Mackay chair fits itself to his shape with wonderful flexibility. Not only does it conform readily to the man with short legs to his long body, and to the other man with long legs to a short body, but on straightening himself for a standing posture, the chair transforms itself into a couch as to all but deposit your head in the lap of the person next behind you. The further and awful intricacy of this chair is that, instantly on the sitting, rising, or standing, the chair adjusts itself to the shape of the man, and adheres closely to the standard.

Behold Gen. Butler placidly seated in one of Mackay's chairs. He had enjoyed the half-hour piece which opened the entertainment, for it was a neat little thing, and he was specially interested in the intricacies of stagecraft. His big bald head reminded me of the globe in the school of my childhood, but which no object of ridicule has ever more naturally impressed itself on the mind. His massive shoulders and length of body made him as conspicuous as most six-footers, and all gazes were immediately transferred from the actors to him after the fall of the curtain. At this juncture, when he was the focus of the audience, he rose to his feet for a stretch of his disproportionately brief legs. The chair silently folded its intricate parts, and stole away to hug its central standard. The statesman, having settled the links in his calvar, reasonably supposed that he would drop gracefully into his seat again. The hard floor, away down on the level of his feet, was the first surface with which he came into contact. His bulky head was just in sight, and it was more grotesque and kaleidoscopic in expression than any comic rubber doll's with distorted by the unheroic nature of the mishap and the hilarity of the spectators.

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